



NEWS RELEASE

Office of Reps. Barton & Brophy McGee

ARIZONA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Reps. Brenda Barton & Kate Brophy McGee

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ANIMAL CRUELTY BILL PROTECTS PETS AND LIVESTOCK

STATE CAPITOL, PHOENIX (March 12, 2014) – House Bill 2587, sponsored by Rep. Barton, protects all of Arizona's animals, while acknowledging the difference between pets and agricultural animals by appropriately placing animals owned by agricultural operators into the agriculture statutes. In addition, penalties for domestic animal abusers are increased, further protecting domestic pets.

"It creates a more workable distinction between farm animals and pets, so prosecutors can prevent animal cruelty on working farms as well as in non-farm settings," Rep. Barton said.

Animals involved in agricultural production are very different from animals kept as pets. It should not be considered animal cruelty if an agricultural animal is unintentionally injured during the normal course of agricultural practices. Barton's legislation recognizes this distinction and ensures that agricultural operators are not prosecuted under definitions designed to protect domestic pets.

The bill also addresses shortcomings of the current animal abuse statute. The statistics show that the majority of animal cruelty cases involve domestic pets, such as cats and dogs. Under current statute hoarding is not a crime and the language for existing violations is unclear.

"The current definitions are unworkable," said Rep. Kate Brophy McGee, R-Phoenix, who signed onto the bill. "We have been told by prosecutors that existing definitions of animal cruelty may actually be preventing investigations and prosecutions into alleged animal cruelty."

The bill adds a new classification to cruelty statutes for animal hoarding, which has become a growing problem. Barton's legislation makes animal hoarding an offense punishable as a class 1 misdemeanor for a first offense, and a class 6 felony for subsequent offenses. In addition to increased penalties for repeat abusers, the bill also acknowledges the psychological aspect to many acts of animal cruelty and allows a judge to order a psychological evaluation when appropriate.

"Supporting legal and acceptable agricultural activities and protecting all animals from the intentional infliction of pain is the purpose of my legislation," Barton added.

The main provisions of House Bill 2587 and its counterpart Senate Bill 1267 are:

- Places animal abuse against animals in an agricultural operation under the Department of Agriculture statutes
- Strengthens current definitions for animal cruelty, making it possible for law enforcement and prosecutors to arrest and prosecute those who abuse animals
- Increases coordination between the Arizona Department of Agriculture and other law enforcement agencies investigating reported agricultural animal abuse
- Classifies the hoarding of animals as animal cruelty
- Increases penalties for repeat offenders of animal cruelty laws
- Allows a judge to order repeat offenders to undergo a psychological evaluation and counseling

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